A SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE

HIS EXCELLENCY THE

LORD LIEUTENANT,

On Thurſday, the 29th of November, 1798,

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED FOR A

GENERAL THANKSGIVING TO ALMIGHTY GOD,

FOR THE LATE GLORIOUS VICTORY OBTAINED BY

LORD NELSON OVER THE FRENCH FLEET,

AND FOR

The other recent Interpoſitions of his good Providence towards the effectual Deliverance of theſe Kingdoms from Foreign Invaſion and Inteſtine Commotion.

BY THE HONOURABLE AND RIGHT REVEREND

WILLIAM KNOX, LORD BISHOP OF KILLALOE.

Publiſhed by command of his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

TO HIS EXCELLENCY

CHARLES MARQUIS CORNWALLIS,

THIS SERMON,

(Published by his Excellency's Command)

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED, BY HIS EXCELLENCY'S

MOST DEVOTED,

AND MOST OBEDIENT HUMBLE SERVANT,

W. KILLALOE.

A

SERMON, &c.

2ND BOOK OF CHRONICLES, 7TH CHAPTER, 14TH VERSE.

"*If my people, which are called by my name,*
"*ſhall humble themſelves, and pray, and ſeek*
"*my face, and turn from their wicked ways,*
"*then will I hear from Heaven, and will for-*
"*give their ſins, and will heal their land.*"

IN obedience to the commands of the ſupreme head of the church in theſe kingdoms, we are now aſſembled, for the purpoſe of offering up our thanks to that Being, who has recently renewed to the civilized and Chriſtian world an earneſt of his protection, and has ſingled us out to be the humble inſtruments of his divine will.

On this day, and at the ſame inſtant, have all the inhabitants of a great and populous empire, proſtrated themſelves before the throne of the Almighty.—An occaſion ſo ſingular and important deſerved and demanded a proceeding ſo ſtriking and ſublime; for never ſurely were we on our knees to our heavenly Protector, at a period when his unſpeakable kindneſs called for gratitude more fervent and profound.

I know not with what feelings your boſoms have been this day poſſeſſed, but I confide that they have been occupied by ſentiments appropriated to the ſolemnity at which you have aſſiſted:—can I doubt it, indeed, when I perceive around me ſo many who have taſted,—ſome, alas! who have drunk deep,—of that cup of affliction, with which it ſometimes pleaſes the Almighty to try and to correct his people?—men who have been engaged in a ſtruggle ſo difficult and ſo doubtful, as muſt have forced reflection on the moſt unthinking mind, and ſoftened to gratitude and piety the moſt callous and perverted heart.

No, not a man whom I now behold,—I believe I may almoſt ſpeak without an exception,—but may boaſt, that to his prudence, and to his liberality,

liberality, to his patience, and to his activity, to his temper, and to his courage, is the Chriſtian world, in a great meaſure, indebted for its preſervation from utter ruin and extinction.

Great and momentous as have been the atchievements of our fleets; glorious and critical as was the victory which we this day chiefly celebrate, a victory which has ſhamed and rallied a trembling world; ſtruck down as has been the pride and ambition of the enemy, by the vigorous arm of Britain—of Britain, that nation which, alone and unaſſiſted, has flung herſelf into the Thermopylæ of Europe, and reſcued her from the diſgrace of French dominion and the thraldom of French alliance;—let us ſpeak the truth!—The conteſt in which you have been engaged, and which never would have been brought to a ſucceſsful iſſue, had not you ſummoned to your aid every virtue as auxiliaries to your valour, equalled in its difficulty, and rivalled in its conſequences, the moſt ſplendid exploits which crowd into the pages of our recent hiſtory:—ſince of this there cannot be a doubt, that no wound ſo deadly to the Britiſh empire, and through it to civilized ſociety, could have been inflicted, as that which the virtuous and patriotic part of this community has lately warded off.—And if, let me add,

in the proſecution of that ſtruggle, paſſion may, in ſome inſtances, have maſtered reaſon; if the convulſions of nature have ſometimes ſnapped the fetters of law; if the voice of religion has been drowned in the clamour of revenge;—if, I ſay, ſuch charges are calumnies, they may be deſpiſed; if they are truths, they will ſoon be forgotten: they are tranſitory ſpots, and bury themſelves in the blaze of your virtues.

In what I have juſt addreſſed to you, I cannot accuſe myſelf of having ſacrificed to panegyric the ſtrictneſs of truth.—It was my duty (and happily my inclination coincided with it) to remind you of your paſt actions, when they could ſerve as an example for your future conduct.—In the progreſs of this diſcourſe, I ſhall obſerve an equal freedom and ſincerity in reminding you of your errors, as a warning of what you ſhould avoid.

Let me now ſolicit your attention, while I lay before you my ſentiments, reſpecting the real meaning and object of the ceremonies of this day.

If we imagine that the Supreme Being, to whom we have been offering up praiſe and prayer, requires them from us as a homage

from his vaſſals, we form a very erroneous and a very degrading notion of his attributes. He requires and does inſiſt, it is true, upon outward forms of reſpect from us, his creatures, becauſe, ſuch is the imperfection of our nature,—ſo cloſe the connection, in this mixed ſtate of being, between the corporeal and ſpiritual part of our frame,—that any attempt at abſtract devotion, either ſwells the mind into enthuſiaſm and frenzy, or ſuffers it to collapſe into apathy and indifference. — The religion, therefore, which God in his mercy has revealed to us, accommodates itſelf to our imperfections, and enjoins not only practical, but even ceremonial, duties; in order that the energy of the ſoul may be kept awake by the vigilance of the ſenſes:— but it would argue an utter ignorance of it, to ſuppoſe that private reformation and public example was not the end, prayer and humiliation but the means.

In the text, it is to be obſerved, two things are required from us:—firſt, to humble ourſelves before God;—and next, and as it were by conſequence, to turn from our wicked ways; and, in return, we are promiſed — Oh, may we deſerve that that promiſe be fulfilled! — that our ſins ſhall be forgiven, and our *land be healed.*

Let me, then, inquire whether our part of the covenant has been faithfully performed! We have prayed, and we have knelt, and we have bowed, at the name of our Saviour; but have we really, and in the genuine ſpirit of the injunction, *humbled ourſelves before God?*

Did the warrior lay aſide his glory, did the ſtateſman lay aſide his ambition, did the merchant lay aſide his cupidity, when he knelt before the altar? Was all the pride of victory extinguiſhed in the breaſt of him on whoſe brow ſit the laurels of the Eaſt? Has he ſaid with ſincerity "not unto me, Lord, not unto "me, but to thy name, give the praiſe?"— Has he acknowledged to his own heart, that faint and fleeting was the tumultuous ſatisfaction which he derived from the ſhouts and acclamations of the field, but that it was the widow and the orphan reſcued from deſtruction, whoſe bended knees, uplifted hands, and ſtreaming eyes, have planted bleſſings in his heart, and ſcattered roſes on his pillow? Have the counſellors of the crown, on whoſe wiſdom this nation places its reliance, have they reflected how much of the ſucceſs of their meaſures has ariſen from combinations of circumſtances, unforeſeen and unexpected, and which in our blindneſs we call chance, "regarding not the

" work of the Lord, nor conſidering the opera-
" tion of his hands?" Have they ſaid, with our Saviour, " I thank thee, O Father, that thou
" haſt concealed theſe things from the wiſe and
" prudent, and revealed them unto babes?" Did they determine to combat their prejudices; to extinguiſh their animoſities; to forget their party feuds; to judge their enemies and opponents with candour; to give the ſame credit to the motives of other men, which they require for their own; to ſubmit cheerfully and freely to ſuperior wiſdom and virtue, though inhabiting a rival's breaſt; and, in a word, to labour not for their own fame, but for the benefit of their country?

In the courſe of the ſervice of the church, they have promiſed all this, and more; yet, let me not be accuſed of too much miſtruſt, if I turn to you the other ſide of the picture, and aſk you whether your minds have not ſometimes wandered from the contemplation of your infirmities, errors, and miſconduct, to the more pleaſing images, which your proſpects of wealth, reputation, and power, have offered to your fancy?

I am perfectly aware, however, of the averſion with which thoſe who are engaged in the

active buſtle, and buſy ſcenes of life, liſten to him who bids them look beyond it; and how laviſhly the terms *cant* and *hypocriſy* are beſtowed upon thoſe, who tell you that the liberal accommodating ſyſtem of opinions which you embrace, which is ſo indulgent to your paſſions, ſo tender of your vices, ſo merciful to your crimes—is neither the morality, nor the religion, which Chriſt has taught; the truth of which he has atteſted with his blood; and on the obſervance of which depends your happineſs or miſery for ever. I know, however, that the diſcouragement which is thrown in the way of thoſe who have the boldneſs truly and fairly to expoſtulate with you on ſuch ſubjects, is leſs intended to diſconcert the preacher, or to ſilence the pulpit, (both of which you can ſhun at pleaſure) than to ſilence, diſconcert, and drive away, *another* monitor, whoſe expoſtulations no ribaldry can diſcountenance; whoſe arguments no ſophiſtry can ſubvert; whoſe reproaches no ſubmiſſion can deprecate; whoſe penalties no flight can evade; that *advocate*, whoſe loud and energetic eloquence penetrates your cloſeſt receſſes; that familiar, who purſues you to your cloſet, enters with you into your chamber, lies with you on the couch of reſt, and governs even fancy in your dreams; that judge, whoſe ſeat is in your ſoul; that preacher, whoſe pulpit is in your heart:—

heart: — Have you, then, I repeat it, have you, this day, made a ſolemn vow, that you will break the fatal ſpell in which your vicious habits have encircled you? that you will beat down, and trample upon, thoſe giant paſſions which obſtruct the way to virtue? that you will conſult, for the direction of your future conduct, the long cloſed, long neglected, almoſt forgotten, book of God?—that book, which, ſuch is the depravity and melancholy folly of the times, there are few of the male part of this congregation who would not be aſhamed publicly to peruſe; — that book, however, whoſe authority, as Chriſtians, you muſt acknowledge, and which has applied to ſuch as you this terrifying denunciation, "Whoever ſhall be aſhamed of me "and of my words, in this adulterous and ſin-"ful generation, of him alſo ſhall the Son of "Man be aſhamed, when he cometh in the "glory of his Father with his holy angels."

How often, I aſk you, how often are we to expect that the tempeſt ſhall rage, and the billows riſe in our behalf? Can we again hope that the heart of the traitor ſhall be miraculouſly touched with mercy, and the torch which was to have kindled the mine on which you ſtood, drop from his repentant hand? — No; imagine not that, by blinding yourſelves, you

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can impoſe on Heaven;—the impiety of ſuch attempts is not more ſhocking, than their weakneſs is deplorable. It is but too obvious that you are ſunk into an indifference, upon the only ſubject to which a virtuous, a wiſe, or even a prudent man ought ever to be alive—the means of ſecuring to himſelf felicity eternal:—without that object in view, let us be aſſured, that the moſt virtuous propenſities will degenerate into imbecility, the wiſeſt projects be baffled, and the moſt prudent calculations lead to inextricable error.

I come now to the ſecond diviſion, and laſt condition of my text, the admonition to us to turn from our wicked ways.

It has fallen to the lot of the preſent inhabitants of the world to be witneſſes to an attempt, made with too fatal a ſucceſs in a fair portion of the globe, to looſen all thoſe ties which hold men together in ſociety; but more particularly to deſtroy that principle which is the eſſence of ſociety itſelf—without which we may gather and be a herd, but cannot aſſociate and form a community—I mean, the inviolable nature of property:—for, from the moment man ceaſes to reſpect his neighbour's poſſeſſions, from that moment, neceſſarily, he enters into a ſtate of warfare,

warfare, open or concealed; and, borrowing from the moſt ſavage beaſt all his moſt furious paſſions, adds them to his own: — humanity, that quality ſo peculiarly appropriated to our ſpecies as to derive from it even its name, retires hooted from the ſcene; and juſtice, neglected, deſpiſed, and trampled on, gathers up her tattered garments, and ſeeks a more hoſpitable clime: — the horrors and enormities which follow may then ſhake and terrify our ſouls; they cannot ſurprize our underſtandings. — Man, made in the image of God, loſes his divine nature, and retains alone thoſe ſatanic qualities which our firſt parents purchaſed by the firſt theft. The indiſpenſably ſacred nature of property, however, is a truth, which, in the preſent ſtate of your population, and the neceſſary varieties of circulation and degrees of knowledge which that ſtate produces, it is not to be expected, will equally affect the whole, or even a large portion, of the people; — yet, unleſs they act under its ſtrongeſt convictions, what ſecurity can we have that the whole ſtructure of ſociety may not the next hour be tumbled in the duſt. The ſtability then of a ſtate muſt depend upon the tenacity with which that fundamental tenet adheres to the minds of its ſubjects; — a tenet, it is true, which the reaſoner will arrive at from reflection, or the prudent man will eſta-

bliſh

bliſh from experience, but which is ever at variance with, whilſt it is unable to ſtand againſt, the enterprizing paſſions of the people. It follows, therefore, that ſome higher authority than human laws, ſome ſanction more ſolemn and imperious than human reaſon, is neceſſary to rivet it on the minds of the people, and to mould it into their earlieſt habits.

That authority, what is it? Religion:—that religion which was revealed to the Jews, and extended to the Gentiles ratified and perfected by Chriſt: that religion which not only enjoins to its followers a ſtrict obſervance of the rights of property, but even forbids them to covet the poſſeſſions of their neighbours; and which, under the Chriſtian diſpenſation, completes the ſanction, ſince, by inſiſting on the neceſſity of brotherly love, and the abſence of all ſelfiſh deſires, it places this great principle of ſociety in an impregnable fortreſs. He that admits the divine law therefore to be binding, will neither violate nor covet the property of another. Of this truth, then, we cannot but be aſſured, that on the religion of the people reſts the ſecurity of the ſtate;—that, without it, no mechaniſm of ſociety, however artful and ingenious, no mound of government, however broad and ſtrong, can long head out a maddened and corrupted people.

Preſerve

Preſerve it, and ſociety is ſafe; baniſh it, and ſociety ceaſes to exiſt. Apply what I have ſaid to France, and if in the application it ſtrikes you, as it does me, that the traitors of this country were following its ſteps;—whilſt our gratitude to God will be increaſed, for the dangers we have eſcaped, our exertions in our country's cauſe will continue undiminiſhed.

It was not there ſufficient to delude the ignorant and thoughtleſs with ſome precarious, perhaps unattainable, good; it was not ſufficient to tempt the envious with the deſtruction of their ſuperiors; it was not ſufficient to inflame the vindictive with the gratification of their revenge; it was not ſufficient to animate the proud, to inflate the vain, and to ſtimulate the ſelfiſh with that near approach of power, of honour, and of wealth, which the overthrow of order offered to their imaginations; ſtill the humble, ſelf-denying, doctrines and example of our Saviour, which ſink into the worſt of hearts, and operate at length compunction and reformation, were obſtacles which it became neceſſary to remove; his doctrines, therefore, were denied or ridiculed, his life diſputed, his miniſters reviled and perſecuted, his ſanctuary polluted, and his worſhip contemned. What has been the conſequence? I ſpeak not of their pious, their bleeding,

ing monarch; I ſpeak not of his conſort, murdered and defamed; I ſpeak not of the innocent and helpleſs, butchered in the face of day, and even at the altar's baſe. But ſee the liberty they have eſtabliſhed, and compare it with ours, which they wiſh us to renounce!

If, in that free country, an individual happens unfortunately, either from his own induſtry or that of his anceſtors, to poſſeſs ſuch a portion of wealth as to excite the avarice of his rapacious neighbour, a private denunciation hurries him to a peſtilential gaol; there, without friends, (for who dares claim acquaintance with the ſuſpected!) without trial, if he is inſignificant and forgotten; without juſtice, if he is eminent and recollected; he either periſhes in ſilence by famine and diſeaſe, or a mock trial, a populace hired or intoxicated to inſult him, and an ignominious execution, await upon that opulence which conſtitutes his guilt. To be eminently learned, wiſe, virtuous, and religious, are there as ſure indications as to be rich and induſtrious, and as certain omens of deſtruction; for, how can pride, envy, folly, impiety, and revenge, bear to be tortured by the reproving preſence of wiſdom, virtue, and religion!

The opulent, therefore, conceal their wealth; the virtuous weep, and are ſilent; the religious man trembles whilſt he prays; on all ſides, nothing but ſuſpicion, falſehood, and fear. Every relation of life ſeems diſſolved; the father dreads to communicate with his ſon, leſt in his offspring he ſhould meet an informer; the deareſt friends, conſcious of mutual, and now perhaps dangerous, ſecrets, fly to the ſanguinary tribunal, to anticipate treachery, and be the firſt to betray; no words ſo innocent, but a ſuſpicious and bloody judge, and a crafty accuſer, may make evidence of guilt; even ſilence is conſtrued into criminality, and is often the pretext of death. This is a weak picture of the liberty of France; for the day would be ſpent, and language would be exhauſted, in deſcribing the outrages which diſgrace that name.

What, then, is that liberty which we have tried, which we enjoy, which we love, which we will defend, which is our conſolation, our happineſs, our pride; which is the gift of our progenitors; and which ſhall be the rich portion and inheritance of our poſterity? We have rank without oppreſſion, religion without bigotry, loyalty without ſervitude; the induſtrious is protected; the licentious is repreſſed; the peaſant has his own, and neither the prince nor the peer

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can diſpoſſeſs him; the mechanic labours, and is rewarded; the ſcholar ſtudies, and is reſpected; the wiſe, the virtuous, and the pious, live the objects of emulation, not the victims of envy! Such is the contraſt; and ſuch the triumph of law over anarchy, and of religion over infidelity. Let then this maxim be deeply rooted in our breaſt, that without religion there cannot be virtue; and without virtue, there cannot be public or private happineſs; and let us not doubt, that the men who excite our jealouſy, our envy, and our pride, againſt thoſe whom the conſtitution, and the neceſſity of order have appointed our ſuperiors; who teach us to elude, or encourage us to trample on, the law; only lead us to our ruin, and hope, on our fall, to build their own advancement. Our real friend, depend upon it, is he who teaches us to temper the violence of our paſſions; to conquer our vicious habits; to cultivate our virtuous propenſities; to be humble without ſervility; honeſt, ſincere, and religious, without moroſeneſs; peaceable without timidity; paſſive in our obedience to the law, and active in its ſupport; but, above all, never to forget the obligations we owe to him that died for us, and who requires no return at our hands, but to obey theſe divine precepts, which are the beſt ſecurity for happineſs in this life,

life, and the ſure promiſe of eternal felicity in the next.

View the progreſs to the preſent ſituation of France. The internal enemies of her conſtitution well knew, that to weaken the ties of religion was the ſure way to overturn that conſtitution. They denied the exiſtence of a God, they ridiculed his miniſters, they painted vice in thoſe bewitching colours that ſeduce the innocent and impoſe upon the weak; they called upon the pride of man to exerciſe his reaſon, and the paſſions of men ſoon became the willing advocates of infidelity: what was the conſequence? on the ruins of religion, modern gigantic reaſon aroſe, and under the banners of the Rights of Man, united the weak, the wicked, the vain, the viſionary, the deſperate in fortune, and the deſperate in character, to overturn the conſtitution of their country; fatally they ſucceeded, and every man, deſerving of a place in ſociety, ſuffered by its fall.

Such now might have been the ſituation of theſe kingdoms, had not the Almighty, in his mercy, protected us:—ere this, you might have ſeen thoſe abandoned men, who are juſtly now the outcaſts of ſociety, driving you with contemptuous brutality from the altars of your

God;—ere this, you might have had to lament an exiled nobility, a degraded prieſthood, a bankrupt commerce, and a ruined yeomanry; —ere this you might have ſeen a licenſed plunderer, ſanctioned by a decree of a national convention, entering your dwellings, ſeizing upon the profits of your honeſt induſtry, and in the name of liberty driving you to the field of battle.

Let us not be deluded by the infidel in politics or in religion; let not the ſpecious pretence of true and rational inquiry, of vindicating the dignity of man, and the liberty of the citizen, ſeduce us to embark in a cauſe, which, whilſt it profeſſes to elevate and refine our nature, degrades and corrupts it. Let not the reformers of the preſent day prevail on us to exchange religion for infidelity, and liberty for licentiouſneſs. Who and what were the people who benefited by the revolution of France? Was it the noble, was it the prieſthood, was it the enlightened, was it the landlord, was it the merchant, was it the tradeſman, was it the yeoman? No: perhaps it may be ſaid it was the peaſant. Let us conſider what would be their ſituation, if, for our ſins, this country was ſucceſsfully invaded. I will ſuppoſe, that, for a ſhort time, they revelled in the plunder

of their ſuperiors, that they raiſed their arms againſt thoſe that fed them, and that they reduced them to a ſituation lower than their own; ſhort would be their gratification; the fountain, from whence they drew their ſupport, dried up, to what are they to look?

But let them not ſuppoſe that an invading enemy, with plunder as their object, with deſpair and beggary in their train, would even allow them to enjoy that plunder.

Have they not, in every country into which they have entered, commenced by protecting property, in order that they might themſelves levy contributions on the rich; and have they not concluded, if forced to retreat, by plundering every deſcription of men, by committing atrocities till then unheard of among civilized nations, till they at length rouſed an indignant peaſantry to revenge the wrongs they ſuffered?

To protect our country from foreign and hoſtile domination; to ſave our conſtitution from the more mercileſs invaſion of a ferocious and bloody anarchy; to maintain our holy religion pure and uncontaminated; to reſcue from certain ſlaughter every man that is eminent for rank, virtue,

learning, or talents; to ſecure our houſes from being plundered, our lands from being laid waſte, and our domeſtic comforts from being deſtroyed; to ſnatch the wife of our boſom, and the daughter of our tender affection, from the ſanguinary graſp of the midnight raviſher, triumphing in his guilt, and taunting us with our miſery; theſe are the duties which the preſent times call upon us to exerciſe. If at this awful criſis (for awful ſtill it is) our courage or our prudence fail us; if we ſhrink from the danger, from apprehenſion, indolence, avarice, or jealouſy; if we do not come forward with a zeal which diſdains diſtruſt or fear;—in vain ſhall the manufacturer hope to gain the juſt profits of his induſtry:—arbitrary power ſhall come with the ſcythes and ſeals of requiſition, mow down our crops, and appropriate our merchandize: when our ſons are forced to gaol, and our daughters to pollution, when our necks are ſtretched under the fatal ſteel, ſhall we ſorely and too late lament our treacherous puſillanimity.

But, happily for our country and ourſelves; happily for the peace, the morality, and religion, of the civilized world; we poſſeſs a nobility, a gentry, and a yeomanry, on whoſe vigour and energy of mind, luxury has not yet laid her benumbing

numbing hand! The ſpirit which now animates Ireland, if accompanied by perſeverance, is no doubt deſtined to ſave the moral world.

But let us conſider what is the condition of our inferiors, whether we are intirely innocent of their depravity, and whether, if we follow our calamities to their ſource, they may not lead us back upon ourſelves.

In this country, it happens that the modes of Chriſtianity and church diſcipline differ in the different ranks; the influence of a religious example, therefore, though certainly of great weight, is not of ſuch deciſive moment as in many other ſtates. We contrived that the teachers of the popular faith ſhould be ſent from the meaneſt hovels of ignorance and ſloth, to receive their education in a foreign, and frequently a hoſtile, land; from which, if they returned with a profuſe ſtore either of bigotry or atheiſm, whom are we to blame? To me I muſt confeſs that it is alone wonderful, that, among the clergy of the Roman Catholic perſuaſion, we can diſtinguiſh ſo many virtuous and pious men; to the keeping, however, of ſuch perſons, ſo prepared and fitted for the office, did we conſign the conſciences of two-thirds of our people: — and what has been the fruit of ſuch policy?

Well, an antidote might have been found in the education of the laity themſelves; had that been attended to, we might ſtill have engaged one auxiliary, and that a powerful one, and, when it became neceſſary, have ſet up the Bible againſt the prieſt:—no:—as if reſolutely bent on our own deſtruction, with a blind and infamous infatuation did we wed the people to their ignorance, and thus leave them an eaſy prey to every deſigning demagogue, whether prieſt or layman. The wandering beggar, the fictitious pedlar, any wretch who poſſeſſed the rare faculty of reading, and whom ſedition had trained to its purpoſes, became the moral and political inſtructor of the Iriſh people:—and what has followed?—a conſpiracy, the moſt extraordinary, for the numbers engaged and for the ſecrecy obſerved, that hiſtory has ever recorded, and which poſterity will ſcarcely believe, grew up about us, increaſing in years and in maturity, without impediment, I might almoſt ſay without detection;—nay, ſo little were we acquainted with our countrymen, or their deſigns, that, in ſpite of the public demonſtrations which frequently burſt forth, ſo ſtill was the ſilence which followed each partial exploſion, that ſome of the moſt thinking and learned men amongſt us perſiſted, almoſt to the end, in diſputing the poſſibility of a general eruption.

Let

Let me not, however, be here ſuppoſed to ſpeak of thoſe who feigned to believe nothing, becauſe they knew all, or who denied the conſpiracy and predicted the rebellion, that they might have the praiſe of ſagacity in foreſeeing the one, whilſt they averted the ſuſpicion of being implicated in the other; of thoſe temporiſing and trafficking politicians, who, battening in the ſecurity of a legal government, purchaſed from the conſpirator and rebel the promiſe of a diſhonourable life or a precarious property, by betraying their brethren to the aſſaſſin's knife; thoſe livid traitors, who, from the capital, correſponded with the beſiegers, and endeavoured, with the cant of humanity, or the ridicule of our juſt fears, to deceive and diſarm its garriſon; who told us, that the poſt of ſafety was with the people, but who, when the people roſe, found the poſt of ſafety in Great Britain. Nor do I ſpeak of thoſe timid traitors, who walked your ſtreets, dreſſed in the garb and colours of diſloyalty, encouraging rebellion by talking of the tyranny of government, themſelves the living objects of its lenity (I will not ſay of its weakneſs), recruiting the ranks of rebellion which they had not ſpirit to join, blowing the flames of ſedition, that, as the cauldron boiled, they, like the droſs, might riſe ſuperior to the purer metal.

Nor yet of thoſe faint-hearted men, the murmurs of whoſe loyalty could not even burſt the fetters of a whiſper;—who endeavoured, even before their own domeſtics, to huſh to ſilence the indignant loyaliſt, leſt it ſhould be told, that, in their preſence, a traitor was called a traitor; a plunderer, a plunderer; a murderer, a murderer: of theſe I do not, of ſuch I diſdain to ſpeak; leave we them to the contempt of their country, the throbbings of their ſhame, the bitter invectives of their conſcience.

In an ignorant ſecurity, however, we ſtood upon the ſands which were ſinking under our feet, nor did we thoroughly awake from our deluſive dreams, till the waves of rebellion poured in upon us from every quarter. I know it is an opinion held by many perſons of great conſideration and authority, that learning is to the common people only a vehicle of error, and that every encouragement of it is conſequently a miſtaken though well-meant policy;—yet, let me bring to your minds an example with which you are all acquainted, that of the ſiſter kingdom, and, comparing it with our own, obſerve the progreſs of French principles in each. At the commencement of the French revolution, the downfal of what was then thought an odious tyranny, and the promulgation of the moſt

virtuous

virtuous and attractive ſentiments by the ſanguinary hypocrites who overthrew it, were received in Great Britain with an almoſt general and enthuſiaſtic approbation. Admiration was quickly followed by a deſire of imitation; and the coloſſal ſtatue of the Britiſh conſtitution, which had been ſo many centuries ago hewn out of the rugged Saxon rock; which had withſtood the attack of the rude and barbarous Norman, and reſiſted the unſteady ſtroke of the miſguided Stuart; which had lain concealed during the tyrant commonwealth, and ſeemed loſt during the two ſucceeding reigns, but which was finally reſtored and perfected at the revolution;—that boaſt of human reaſon; that ark of genuine liberty; that tabernacle of ſocial happineſs; had tottered, and muſt have fallen, but for the timely interpoſition of a vigorous government, and a virtuous ariſtocracy. But what, alas! would have availed the vigour of government, or the virtue of its allies, had not the people themſelves opened their eyes upon the precipice at their feet?—That decent and pious people liſtened to the arguments of reaſon, as they had before done to thoſe of deluſion;—they read, they were convinced, and they eſcaped the ſnare of the betrayer. Not ſo our people: they received the taint, the infection ſpread, we could not apply a cure;—the tumour

roſe,

roſe, and we reſorted at length to the only remedy that remained, the ſword: — and ſuch muſt ever be the melancholy circle whilſt we ſhut againſt ourſelves the paſſage to their underſtandings, and the avenues to their hearts.

I will no longer dwell upon theſe painful recollections, but draw from them the following concluſion: that all the evils which we have ſuffered we have drawn upon ourſelves, by neglecting, as we have done, the morals and religion of the people; and that, if we do not actively and immediately "turn from that way," we but poſtpone the hour of deſtruction, and cannot hope that our prayers will be heard: let us be aſſured, that the falſe ſecurity on which we tread is a thin and treacherous cruſt, which has cooled over a liquid fire that boils beneath. Let me then moſt earneſtly entreat you, if you ever again expect to ſubdue the paſſions of your people; if you expect to check the progreſs of democracy amongſt them; reſcue their minds from the tyranny of traitors, by opening a free paſſage for yourſelves. Give them that degree of learning which may enable them to underſtand the arguments of loyalty, as well as the ſuggeſtions of treaſon. Encourage thoſe inſtitutions by which that learning is extended. Look the people again in the face; when

when it is in your power, familiarize yourſelves with them; the taſk is diſguſting, but it will repay you; take them out of the hands of their perfidious leaders, by receiving them into your own arms. Recal, to ſhare with you in the work of mercy, thoſe timid fugitives of your own rank, who fled when you fought. — But, no!—let them remain! It is on you alone that I rely:—the brave man only can uplift a vanquiſhed foe. The legiſlature has already taken one ſtep towards the improvement of thoſe who are to give religious inſtruction to the Roman Catholic; — ſecond its endeavours; recollect that the cauſe in which you are engaged is the cauſe of Chriſtianity itſelf, within the pale of which all ſects are comprehended! Had we done ſo, we might have laughed to ſcorn the impotent efforts of our enemies, and, ſitting on the rock of truth, have eyed with pity and indifference the fretful billows foaming and breaking at its baſe. But let us, above all things, ſtudy to adapt our lives to the precepts of the Goſpel; you will then, without requiring to be reminded, *humble* yourſelves with true humility *before God*, then will you acquire his grace to *turn from your wicked ways*, then will He *hear you from Heaven*, and then, and not till then, can you expect that He will *heal your land*.

A

SERMON, &c.

PROVERBS, CHAP. XXIV. VERSE XXI.

" *My Son, fear thou the Lord and the King,*
" *and meddle not with them that are given to*
" *change.*"

IN the diſcourſe which I purpoſe this day to addreſs to you, I feel an intereſt which ſeldom poſſeſſes the mind of a Preacher, accuſtomed to the ordinary functions of our Miniſtry. To confirm the virtuous, and, if poſſible, to ſhake and ſtartle the vicious, is the object, and only hope, of him, whoſe audience is compoſed of perſons advanced in years, and ſettled in their habits and opinions:

nions: and the liſtleſs attention, which from ſuch congregations he has too much reaſon to expect, is ill calculated either to animate his hopes, or to alarm his fears. Conſoled with the approbation of a few judicious hearers, he looks with diffidence for the beſt and deareſt reward of his labours, a conviction that they have not been waſted on a barren ſoil, but that he may anticipate with confidence, a rich and abundant harveſt.

In this auditory—I ſpeak not of the ſelect few to whom I owe the invaluable obligation of early inſtruction—but in that more numerous deſcription of my hearers, on the features of whoſe mind, as on thoſe of their perſons, time has not yet laid his rigid hand; whoſe candour the intercourſe of a deceitful world has not yet clouded with ſuſpicion; to whoſe openneſs of heart a falſe prudence has not yet preſented the maſk of diſſimulation; whoſe generous feelings neither fear nor intereſt has repreſſed, and from whoſe defenſive pride, inſolence and meanneſs ſtand equally aloof:—In you my friends, I not only ſee a field in which every virtue may be produced and flouriſh; but in whoſe luxuriant ſoil may ſhoot up a ſpontaneous crop of the deadlieſt poiſons.

Reflections

Reflections ſuch as theſe muſt at all times ſuggeſt themſelves, on occaſions like the preſent, to a perſon who has paſſed through that dangerous ſtage of life which you have juſt reached; who looks back upon the perils to which he was himſelf expoſed, and ſome only of which he has eſcaped; and who ſees you walking unconcerned on the edge of thoſe precipices which he once as giddily diſregarded. But if the years which men of my age have paſſed through were years of difficulty and danger, who is there that, on caſting the moſt indiſtinct and tranſitory glance into futurity, will not perceive a hoſt of new dangers and new difficulties, perils unknown to his regular and peaceful times, gathering in your path, and way-laying all your ſteps! I do not mean, my friends, to alarm you with the apprehenſion of perſonal evils. To the dreadful warfare in which the world is engaged, I confidently oppoſe your courage:—that courage which you have proved, which I have witneſſed, by which your country has profited, and in which your ſovereign exults. But to the encounter of that moral warfare which threatens your eternal, as well as your temporal, repoſe, I muſt invoke every energy of your mind, and call upon you ſo to cultivate the early ſhoots of your youthful virtues, that they may produce the maturer fruits of ſolid and practical improvement.

I ſhall,

I ſhall, therefore, addreſs a few obſervations to you on the dangers which await you, the form which they * aſſume, and the conduct which you ought to obſerve in encountering or avoiding them.

The text which I have choſen ſuggeſts the objects of my diſcourſe. The precept which it contains is addreſſed to thoſe who, like you, are on the threſhold of the world; the perſon from whom it proceeds, ſtamps it with the higheſt authority; and the application of it to the preſent times, it would be an affront to your underſtandings to queſtion.

" My ſon," ſays Solomon, " fear thou the " Lord and the King, and meddle not with " them that are given to change:" and he adds, " for their calamity ſhall riſe ſuddenly, " and who knoweth the ruin that ſhall befal " them!"

The calamities which the inſpired writer foretels to thoſe who deſpiſe the wiſdom of their

* The ſubject of this diſcourſe is too extenſive for the limits of an exhortation from the pulpit; its utility, therefore, if it poſſeſſes any, muſt proceed rather from the reflections to which it leads, than from thoſe which it contains.

forefathers,

forefathers, and, with raſh confidence in their own capacity, forſake the road which they have beaten, the hiſtory of the world, for a few years paſt, records with a melancholy correctneſs.—Whether we contemplate the fall of nations, or of individuals; whether we meditate upon the deſtruction of empires, or liſten to the voice of the unhappy victims of that deſtruction; the ſame warning cry ſhall iſſue alike from the ruin and the tomb—"Meddle, O meddle not, my ſon, with thoſe who are given to change."

As ſoon as the immediate reſtraints of paternal authority are removed, and the conduct of a young man becomes ſubject to the more divided, and conſequently leſs vigilant, diſcipline of the univerſity, although timidity, if ſuch be his conſtitution or habit, even if he ſhould be of a bolder nature, may for a ſhort time confine his pleaſures and his principles within their ancient limits, yet ſtill his fixed eye and his fluttering heart indicate too ſurely that the door of the cage ſhall not long be opened in vain; all the qualities and diſpoſitions of his age tempt his flight. Curioſity, a paſſion ſo neceſſary for the attainment of that knowledge from which the ſhort period of his intellectual exiſtence has excluded him, and without which infancy would be lengthened to the grave; and emulation, the

proper objects of which experience has not as yet taught him to ſelect; and fancy, which paints, on the warm canvaſs of a youthful imagination, ſcenes which the world and all its ſuppoſed enjoyments will never realize; impel him (if not controuled by the counſels of an enlightened friend, or of an underſtanding of uncommon ſtrength and maturity) to an intemperate gratification of thoſe paſſions which had ſilently fermented in his mind.

All the opinions which have been inculcated on him, at an age when his reaſon would have been unable to comprehend the evidence and arguments on which they were founded, he diſcovers to be prejudices, and preſumes to be falſe. New opinions, better adapted to palliate his vices and juſtify his exceſſes, glittering with falſe ſentiment, or aſſuming, with affected gravity, the dreſs and deportment of philoſophy, are embraced with avidity, and diſplayed with triumph; he rejoices in his ſudden illumination, and wonders at the darkneſs in which he has ſo long wandered.

Ancient uſages and opinions he holds in unqualified contempt; diſcards them without examination; and with the uſual inconſiſtency of raſhneſs, he becomes prejudiced againſt prejudice;

dice; and thus, rejecting ſuppoſed errors becauſe they are old, and adopting real errors becauſe they are new, in both inſtances he flings away the reins of reaſon, which he had gathered up with ſo much pride and ſelf-complacency.

Such is too often the progreſs of young minds; ſuch has been its progreſs, you too well know, within theſe walls; and you have ſeen to what it has led: — yes, twice twelve months have ſcarcely elapſed ſince a ſcene was opened to your view, which, at the time, almoſt overpowered you with ſurpriſe and horror; and the recollection of which, at this day, cannot but be accompanied with the moſt painful emotions. Within this venerable Seminary, in which ſo many examples of unaffected piety and rational religion offered themſelves daily to your obſervation; within this fabric from which every thing auſtere and forbidding in practical devotion had been ſo long exiled, or rather into which it had never found admiſſion; in ſuch a ſpot as this, will it be believed! was diſcovered a regular combination againſt the Chriſtian faith. Sages in their teens had confederated to reſcue their country from errors, before which the vigorous and innovating genius of a Newton had fallen proſtrate; — in which the cautious, diſcri-

minating, unprejudiced mind of Locke had voluntarily acquieſced; — and which our own ſubtle and analyzing Berkley had not been able to detect. This ſtrange diſcovery afforded you one ſtriking illuſtration of the dangers to which the youthful mind is expoſed, when it reckons upon its own ſtrength, and throws aſide the ſtaff of experience.

But ſpeculative error, and the zeal of propagating novelties, are conſequences ſo natural to the vivacity, vanity, and ardour of youth, that you lamented the folly, whilſt you execrated the conduct of your fellow-ſtudents. Alas! you had not conſidered all the tendencies of the new doctrines; — you had not reflected how nearly the moſt refined ſpeculation and the groſſeſt practice are connected; — nor had you been uſed to obſerve, how much the miſtakes of the head mingle and confound themſelves with the corruptions of the heart; — you could not have believed, what ſhortly afterwards you aſcertained, that the rational enquirer, the advocate of truth, the enemy of ſuperſtition, the univerſal philanthropiſt, was whetting real daggers; and that you, the infidels to atheiſm and treaſon, were deſtined, by the decrees of philoſophy, to expiate your hereſy with your blood. You were not acquainted with the energy which

the

the new principles inſpire; you could not have conceived that public maſſacre and private murder could enter into the meditations of the partners of your table, your ſtudies, and your ſports.—You had been taught to think, that vice was gradual in its progreſs, and that it required the rigour of many winters to harden the human heart againſt the ſympathies of a ſuffering brother: to you it doubtleſs ſeemed impoſſible, that, under the bloom of youth and the ſmile of a friend, ſhould lurk treachery the moſt baſe, and cruelty the moſt relentleſs.—No, you did not comprehend the ripening influence of the new doctrines:—had you known them better, you would have underſtood, that there might be maturity of guilt without maturity of form; and that finiſhed depravity could ſtart forth impatient of the cradle.—Repoſing on your innocence, you ſlept whilſt treaſon watched, murmuring for the ſignal to convert that ſleep to death.—You looked into your own hearts, and you ſaw them ſwelling with affection for the individual, yet not indifferent to the ſpecies; you knew, that to thoſe hearts miſery never ſued in vain, and that for the misfortunes of your fellow-creatures the lovely dew of mercy fell unbidden on your cheek. Indebted for the exiſtence of many years to the anxious and tender ſolicitude of a mother,—guided and in-

ſtructed, at a later period, by the equally kind and anxious, but leſs pliant, affection of a father,—you fully repaid the tenderneſs you had received. Having enjoyed from your entrance into life a gratuitous ſupport, without which you muſt have periſhed; conſcious that you owed much of that ſupport to the duties which Chriſtianity had inculcated, to the habits which had grown out of thoſe duties, and to the laws with which ſociety had ſheltered your infant weakneſs, it could not enter into your minds to imagine, that the firſt return which you owed to religion and ſociety was the ſubverſion of them both:—It could not—no, for you had "feared "the Lord and the King, and had not yet "meddled with them that were given to "change."

I have warned you, my friends, againſt a haſty adoption of opinions unſanctioned by the authority of time; and, in doing ſo, I have reminded you of ſome of the conſequences of adopting them which have fallen more immediately within your own obſervation. I ſhall now endeavour to expoſe to you a few of the ſnares and ſeductions, which induſtrious treaſon and infidelity are hourly ſpreading in your way.

But,

But, before I enter upon that diviſion of my ſubject, let me remove a falſe impreſſion which may have been made by the preceding part of my diſcourſe. If, then, there ſhould be any perſon preſent who infers, from what I have ſaid, any thing hoſtile to free inquiry and rational diſcuſſion, let him be aſſured that he intirely miſapprehends the purpoſe of this exhortation. He that would reſtrain the human mind within any bounds but thoſe which its own faculties preſcribe, violates the laws of its nature, affronts the Supreme intelligence (which has breathed into our clay a ſmall portion of its ſpiritual eſſence), and libels the religion which he profeſſes, the evidence of whoſe truth ſolicits the moſt minute reſearch. It is not free and impartial inquiry that we deprecate, it is haſty and arrogant pre-judgement; our warnings are not addreſſed to thoſe who purſue with patience, modeſty, and candour, the fair deductions of reaſon, but to ſuch as, without patience, modeſty, or candour, are given not to inquiry but to change. It is againſt thoſe I caution you, who allow nothing to *authority*, but every thing to what they call *reaſon*; who deſpiſe the concluſions of wiſdom, confirmed by the experience of ages, when they militate againſt thoſe crude conceptions and narrow views, which a weak underſtanding, acting

upon a ſmall ſtock of knowledge, mocks with the reſpectable name of judgement.

To the deluſion of empirics, ſuch as theſe, you are particularly expoſed. The ſmall circle in which you have already lived, and the ſcanty opportunity which you have had of inquiring into the human character, render you (and it would be ill were it otherwiſe) peculiarly ſuſceptible of favourable impreſſions of thoſe who take the pains to inſinuate themſelves into your eſteem. The opinions of your intimates imperceptibly become your own, your courage ſinks beneath the laſh of ridicule, and your conſtancy yields even where your reaſon heſitates. The love of fame, the nobleſt and moſt uſeful, or the vileſt and moſt pernicious, of paſſions, leads you to imitate, and encourages you to excel, wherever the reward is praiſe. To you, however, a ſmall ſociety is the theatre in which you look for applauſe, and in which the approbation of folly and wickedneſs confers, too often, a cheap and ignominious celebrity. If the opinions which are current among your friends, (do I not contaminate that ſacred name, by applying it to ſuch connections?) be ſuch as indulge your indolence, inflame your vanity, flatter your paſſions, and varniſh your vices; if they make the accidental,

dental, and temporary, and intereſted concluſions of your underſtandings, the only ſtandard of your morality, and the only check upon your conduct; if they poſtpone induſtry and method, to petulance and vivacity, which they miſcal Genius; if they ridicule ſelf-denial, and argue to be innocent every indulgence from which an *immediate* evil does not follow; and, if, with trite and borrowed ribaldry, they ſilence all ſerious diſcuſſion; let me intreat you, if you cannot avoid their acquaintance, at leaſt to ſtand aloof from their intimacy. Their authority even the common rules of evidence will pronounce ſuſpicious, ſince he cannot be a diſintereſted diſputant, whoſe arguments are urged in ſupport of his own conduct.

Such men muſt of neceſſity be given to change, ſince the eſtabliſhed ſyſtem of morals and religion combats thoſe paſſions whoſe chains they wear, and inſiſts on a ſelf-denial incompatible with their ſubmiſſion to vice. Who are the men moſt fervent in their devotion to the new doctrines, and moſt zealous in their promulgation? Inquire into their lives; trace back their opinions to their origin; and what will be the reſult of your obſervation? that they have formed a confederacy between ſophiſtry and vice; and that the tavern and the ſtews

have

have been the veſtibule of their temple of reaſon: you will find that the *reaſon* which they deify, but whoſe altars they prophane, only ſerves to weave the veil which ſhame may throw over their impurity; but that the cultivation of their rational faculties, farther than they can be perverted to a palliative for their vices, is as foreign from their practice, as it is familiar to their profeſſions. You will find, in a word, that pleaſure firſt introduced them to Philoſophy, and that Philoſophy has plunged them into guilt.

If the intemperate current of your blood, boiling in your youthful veins, ſtimulates you to ſenſuality, apply to the Pontiffs of modern Philoſophy for an indulgence, and they will furniſh you with a declamation on the wiſdom of Nature, who has done nothing in vain, and whoſe objects muſt not be fruſtrated by the abſurd reſtrictions of a cold monaſtic morality. If the effervescence of your temperament (phraſes invented by the materialiſts to introduce laxity of manners under the diſguiſe of ſcience) ſhould prompt you to diſturb the domeſtic quiet of a family, and ſtrike the barbed ſhafts of diſtruſt and jealouſy into the boſom of your friend, how eaſy will it be to out-clamour remorſe by an invective againſt the

the ancient, and therefore illiberal, inſtitution, which you have theoretically diſregarded, and practically violated! Is it not that materialiſm to which I have adverted, and which at the bar of morality I arraign, that by making Vice the phyſical and irreſiſtible conſequence of our organic ſtructure, has baniſhed remorſe, and ſtruck the ſceptre from the hand of Conſcience? Has it not thus flung the rein upon the neck of ſenſuality; unſtrung the nerves, and palſied the minds as well as the bodies of the preſent generation?

If ambition be your paſſion, and power your purſuit, Philoſophy will tell you that the end will ſanctify the means, be they ever ſo flagitious; and of that end, its utility when attained, or the probability of its accompliſhment, your independent conſcience is the only judge. But it will carefully conceal from your contemplation a Cromwell diſtruſtful of his relations, a ſlave to his ſervants, and flying from room to room for refuge from his guilty fears; or the more modern uſurper, the dread and execration of millions, ſhrinking from every ſtranger, devoting his laſt friend to the ſcaffold, liſtening with breathleſs terror to every haſty ſtep, and ſhuddering in his ſolitary bath of blood.

A mode

A mode of ſeduction has been practiced by the enemies of Religion and ſocial ſubordination, of which the ſucceſs has been ſo notorious, and ſo much within your particular obſervation, that I ſhould paſs it over in ſilence, were it not ſo artfully adapted to impoſe on perſons of your deſcription, that you cannot be too often reminded of, nor too earneſtly cautioned againſt it. There is a diffidence, as I have already obſerved, in young men, which renders the approbation of their Seniors an object of the greateſt deſire; but to this diffidence is unfortunately added, at a period of life when the mind is better adapted for the reception, than the diſpenſation, of knowledge, an ardent wiſh to diſplay whatever talents or accompliſhments their vanity perſuades them they poſſeſs. To be intruſted with a ſecret; to be initiated into a myſtery; and to form part of a ſociety which places them on a level with men more advanced in years, flatters their pride as it teſtifies a confidence in their manhood. Theſe propenſities were too quickly perceived, and the advantage to be derived from them too well underſtood, to be neglected.

Inſtitutions of various kinds, ſuited to your age, your capacities, and your prejudices, throw open the doors to you at your firſt entrance into the College.

You

You enroll your name, and you become a member of a body to which you are attached by one of the ſtrongeſt ties by which a young man can be bound, your honour. But, once enrolled, however innocent your own intentions, and however ſpecious the original object of the inſtitution; when that object begins to diſplay itſelf in its real colours, ſubject as it is to the controul and ſudden determination of a majority, you know not how to recede. You have not hardihood to oppoſe; you want preſence of mind to ſelect a proper moment for retreat. To bear the appellation of deſerter and apoſtate, requires fortitude beyond your years; unable to eſcape from your ſeducers, you fling yourſelves for protection into their arms, and you become the inſtruments of thoſe whom you abhor.

In this fatal progreſs, from miſtaken honour to the brink of infamy and ruin, may you not be compared to the raſh-ſwimmer, who ventures againſt advice into an ebbing ſea? For a while he ſports upon the waters, and rides exulting on the wave, which floats him towards the ſhore, but which, ſinking as it retires, hides from his apprehenſions the diſtance he has loſt: But when he perceives his error, and that the forms of his companions are fading and leſſening to his view, he beats, with convulſive agony, the element in which

which he ſees his grave, and rends the air with his affrighted cries. Unhappy youth! fainter and more faint, the ſound dies upon the ear, till an awful ſilence tells at length that the ſtruggles of life are at an end, and that the abyſs has cloſed upon him for ever.

It is commonly obſerved, that, in this world, perfection is unattainable; and a juſt deduction has from thence been drawn, that the preſent life is a ſtate of preparation and trial, and but one ſtage, as it were, in the progreſs of the ſoul towards an exiſtence free from all imperfection. Morals, politics, and even religion, partake of this defect of our nature. Not to ſpeak of the interpoſition of the paſſions in the conduct of individuals, by which the labours of the moraliſt are perpetually fruſtrated, do we not find that the beſt reaſoners upon ethics are divided, even at this advanced period of the world, upon the ſubject of the true and proper ground of our duties? Nay, even in the two revelations of the divine will, may we not diſcern a like mixture of apparent imperfection. The firſt, confined for centuries to one people, and adapted to their particular ſituation, may ſeem inadequate, as not being co-extenſive with the inhabited world, nor accommodated, even had it been ſo, to the whole human race; and

though

though the laſt revelation was indeed framed to ſuit all mankind, to whom it promulgated a perfect code of religious duty, how ſmall a portion of the earth, even after the lapſe of eighteen centuries, has it reached, and how many are there, need I aſk you, who refuſe to profit by it, even where it has been longeſt known and publicly profeſſed? If then the Almighty, who could at once have impreſſed his gracious communication upon the whole world, has entruſted its reception to the progreſs of time and human agency, what a leſſon of moderation do we not learn in judging of our own inſtitutions, and not pronouncing that to be evil, which is found not to be perfect! In truth, all the maxims and regulations of mankind, whether applied to the individuals, the ſpecies, or diſtinct ſocieties, are but a compromiſe of difficulties, of which the ſmaller is preferred to the greater, and the choice of which it required long and repeated trials to determine. Hence it happens, that, ſeeing the evil which is preſent, while that which has been avoided is out of our view, we haſtily revolt at thoſe inconveniencies to which true wiſdom would have inſtructed us to ſubmit, and, in our ſhort-ſighted impatience, bring upon ourſelves, upon mankind, or upon our country, a train of the moſt dreadful and leaſt expected calamities.

I offer

I offer theſe reflections to your conſideration, preparatory to the notice which I mean to take of a deſcription of perſons, perhaps the moſt dangerous of your enemies, ſince they are entitled at leaſt to your compaſſion, and perhaps to your eſteem. I ſpeak of a claſs of men, who, innocent in their lives, and ſincere in their profeſſions; ſuperior to all ſordid or ambitious views, and frequently bleſſed, or rather curſed, with diſtinguiſhed talents; are unhappily loaded with a conſtitutional bile, which, finding no natural diſcharge, empties itſelf into the temper, or flies up into the brain. With a temperament thus embittered, they fix their gloomy attention upon thoſe objects alone, on which their fatal propenſity to cenſure can be moſt liberally indulged. In the imagination of ſuch men, the imperfection of human inſtitutions, like the phantoms of a hideous dream, darkens and diſtends; and, with eloquent exaggeration, they communicate to the unreflecting and the ſanguine a contagious alarm. Their cauſtic invective, not faſtening on the mere excreſcences of the ſtate, feeds upon the wholeſome fleſh, and penetrates to the bone of ſociety; too weak to reſiſt their prejudices, too proud to acknowledge their errors, and too ingenious to be eaſily refuted; too reſolute to be ſcared, and too honeſt to be bribed to ſilence; without the loathſome-

neſs of vice to diſguſt, or the ſuſpicion of ſelfiſhneſs to diſcredit, it is unhappily on the nobleſt minds that their influence is the moſt extenſive.

The indignant feelings of a virtuous youth ſtart up in arms at the firſt view of moral depravity; whilſt his pure taſte feelingly recoils from what is incongruous, and he reluctantly quits the hope of meeting with perfection in the works of man. His paſſions once rouſed, inveſtigation is at an end, and his faculties are called out, not for the diſcovery of truth, but for the confirmation of error. Filled with ungenerous and abſurd ſuſpicions, credulous of falſe or mutilated facts, when urged as evidence of unworthy motives, he converts repeated diſapprobation into habitual diſcontent: the neceſſity of change and ſubverſion ſettles as a principle on his mind, and ſhuts the door againſt doubt and deliberation. With the enthuſiaſm of virtue he preſſes forward in the train of crafty ambition, levelling thoſe forms and diſtinctions of ſociety which diſturb the harmony and ſimplicity of his theories, but which he does not, at the ſame time, obſerve to entangle, and embarraſs, and controul, the arbitrary will of man; nor does he wake from his delirium till he finds the demagogue, that he adored, transformed to

the deſpot he abhors; happy at laſt, if, in the miſchief he has produced, a tardy remorſe acquits him of intentional guilt.

That you, my friends, may eſcape that remorſe, not by hardening your hearts againſt the feelings of humanity, but by ſhunning the temptations which encompaſs you, I feel the livelieſt hope. You are now on the eve of that day, when you are to walk abroad into the world. Moſt of you, it is probable, have already made choice of your profeſſions, and your ambitious fancy already climbs the hill which is to open to you the proſpect of your future life. Various are the roads which lead, in every calling and profeſſion, to wealth and eminence. You will find but one, of which happineſs is the termination, and that a ſheltered and retired avenue, through which patient induſtry and unobtruſive virtue, ſlowly and ſilently, but ſecurely, advance.

If the Bar be your object, and your impatience will not brook delay, let your ſpeech be ſmoothed with flattery to the meaneſt of mankind, when by their aſſiſtance (as it often happens) your ſpeed can be advanced; but when you addreſs the judgement-ſeat, let no reſpect for ſtation, no admiration of talents, no defe-

rence to learning and experience, no awe of well-earned dignity, tinge your cheek with ſhame, or impede the volubility of your tongue, and you may early arrive at opulence and infamy. But there is another mode of following that profeſſion, in which ſucceſs is perhaps as certain; which ſubſtitutes diligence for intrigue, knowledge for fluency, argument for vociferation, a ſenſe of duty to your client, for the affectation of zeal in his behalf, and requires, above all, a ſcrupulous regard to truth, and a punctilious jealouſy of your honour; not that honour, however, which ſwaggers through the filth of the profeſſion, and ſilences cenſure with the ſword, but that which ſhrinks from meanneſs, dreads reproach, and challenges inquiry. If you prefer the firſt of theſe paths, you will neceſſarily diſregard the injunction contained in the text; the ſacred truths of Scripture, rejected without examination, will be the objects of your ridicule; and ridicule, the reſource of your ignorance: the inſtitution of the ſabbath, the rites of the church, the feelings of the decent, and the ſenſibility of the devout, you will habitually violate. But if the latter be your choice, your frequent return to this ſacred edifice will demonſtrate, that neither the ſelfiſh corruptions of the world, nor the licentious examples which it offers, and which ſometimes prevail over indolent

and too docile, though well diſpoſed, minds, have been able to taint the purity of your hearts.

If you think your country demands the aſſiſtance of your ſword, and you deſire to wield it with a ſteady hand, you will find that it is the fear of the Lord from which true courage is derived; and that death, againſt which the infidel will ſometimes ruſh with blind and frantic impetuoſity, can be calmly contemplated by that man only who believes it to be but a change of exiſtence, and whoſe conſcience whiſpers no apprehenſion from that change.

Should you turn your attention to the ſtate, the principle which I have formerly recommended will be accompanied with a correſponding moderation of conduct. Deſirous rather of improving what exiſts, than of hazarding a doubtful change, you will perceive that much ſtudy and reflection are neceſſary to a juſt deciſion in political ſubjects, and that intereſt or paſſion, or an impulſe given to your irritable and ſympathetic mind, by a temporary outcry, are but fallacious guides to truth. Firm and diſintereſted, you will equally withſtand the ſeductions of popularity and of power. He that flatters either the people or the prince, does it that he may trample

trample upon each:—whether with meretricious eloquence he inflames the vanity of the crowd, or wears with ſteady craft the courtier's chiſſelled ſmile, time proves, at length, that, though circumſtances may have made him a ſycophant, yet nature had formed him for a tyrant. You will diſdain both. The friend of your country, and the ſupport of the throne, you will receive honours from the one, or applauſe from the other, with a dignified humility; but you will renounce either without a ſigh, when your conſcience demands the ſacrifice.

If the church be your vocation, you will, doubtleſs, be ſenſible of the urgent claims it will eſtabliſh on every virtue of your heart and every faculty of your mind; and that the duties which you aſſume, when you undertake the miniſtry of the Goſpel, pervade and give importance to the minuteſt actions of your lives.—On this copious and intereſting ſubject, however, I forbear to dilate, ſpeaking, as I do, in the preſence of perſons whoſe particular office it is to impart to you the beſt inſtructions upon it, and whoſe approved talents, learning, and virtue, qualify them ſo well for that important duty.

Does your chaſtened and regulated ambition lead you to the purſuit of academical honours alone,

alone, let me direct your obſervation (ſince example has more force than precept) to the man who has reached the ſummit of academic honour and advancement. In him were united to a luminous underſtanding, a perſeverance and diligence which no obſtacle could withſtand; to theſe qualities were annexed a purity of heart, and a love (rather let me call it an adoration) of truth, as rare as it was reſpectable. That man, whoſe virtues and erudition ſtill ſhine with a modeſt luſtre beneath the ſhade of a ſimple and blameleſs life, I need not deſcribe more particularly, ſince he alone, of this congregation, is ignorant to whom the character applies.

I am ſenſible I have no farther claim to your attention; but, deſtined as you are, in this moſt eventful period of the world, to be the ſupport or the deſtruction of your country,—feeling as I do, that upon your fortitude, your courage, your wiſdom, and your virtue, repoſes its future fate,—I withdraw from you with reluctance. In parting from you, I again recommend to your reflections the text on which I have addreſſed you. If, then, you *fear the Lord and the King*, and if you *meddle not with them that are given to change*, I augur that the clouds which are gathering over this iſland, and which the boldeſt cannot contemplate without diſmay, will either break

break in ſilence, or retire beneath the horizon. But if you are ſtung with the luſt of power, or give way to an impatience of reſtraint; if dazzled by the glare of a tranſient illumination, you aſſiſt in breaking up thoſe caverns in which the elements of ſociety have, for ages, been permitted to repoſe; dreadful is the legacy you will bequeath to poſterity! That deceitful and portentous blaze will be followed by a laſting darkneſs; devaſtation and ruin will mark its progreſs, fertility will be converted to waſte, and blank ſolitude ſucceed to peopled plains.

THE END.

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